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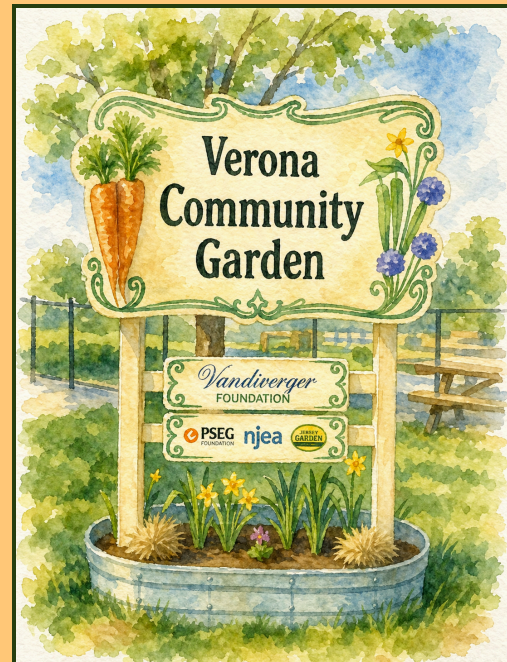
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VERONA COMMUNITY GARDEN

May 15, 2026
Newsletter #7

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In This Issue


- ✦ Reminders & Tips
- ✦ Volunteer Corner
- ✦ Helpful Organic Gardening Resources
- ✦ What's Up in the Vegetable Garden - Peppers
- ✦ What's Up in the Herb Garden - Cilantro
- ✦ Recipes: *Shrimp and Cilantro Shu Mai
*Serrano Cilantro Gin & Tonic
- ✦ Poems/Humor
- ✦ Verona Community Garden and That's My Brick!®


💡 Reminders & Tips

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 **Dogs in the Garden:** Only service dogs are allowed within the members section of the garden. All dogs must be leashed.


 **Giving Garden Volunteers Needed:** Please contact Carol if you are willing to assist in the Giving Garden.

 **Games in the Garden:** Chess sets, checkers, and other games are located in the shed for use in the Vego Giving Garden.

 **Planting Tips:** Include stakes when planting tomatoes. It is best to install stakes while plants are still small. Remember that cucumbers will require 5-6 ft. stakes or trellising. Place leafy greens in the shade of taller plants, as carrots and radishes also perform well with partial shade.

 **Pests & Diseases:** Report any bugs, pests, or diseases to Carol as soon as spotted. We want to stay ahead of any early infestations.

 **Take a Garden Walk:** Take a walk around the garden and note the square foot gardening techniques and unique plant selections being used by your fellow gardeners.

 **Roots & Reads (K-4 Workshop Series)**
May 18 at 4:00 p.m.

Volunteer Corner

We are grateful for all of our volunteers. This feature spotlights only a small sampling of the many people who contribute their time and talents to the garden.

Garden Manager and On-site Carpenter

Carol & Bob Thomas

Carol and Bob Thomas: Carol has been acting as the garden manager since its opening season in 2021. Bob has been our on-site carpenter and support staff.

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Newsletter Team

Brianna A.

Brianna lives in Verona with her fiancè and gardening became their new summer hobby together! She loves cooking (with her own grown veggies!) and making up new recipes!



Tara B.

Tara grew up loving almost every vegetable and was spoiled each summer with fresh-picked cucumbers, tomatoes, beets, squash, and lettuce, just to name a few, from her dad's enormous backyard garden. She credits her father not only for teaching her how to garden, but also for gifting her first gardening shovel when she and her husband bought their home in Verona.

Her love of nature, gardening, and wildlife has led her to volunteer with the



VCG, as a leader with Verona's Cub Scout Pack 32 and Boy Scout Troop 2, and with the National Park Service as a Shorebird Ambassador at Sandy Hook. In the community garden, she especially enjoys growing tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, herbs, and flowers. She is also the proud mom of a rising college freshman, one lovable Australian Shepherd, and one very sweet kitty cat.

Nina J.

In addition to working on the newsletter, Nina is actively involved with the Junior Women's Club of Verona, where she chairs the Nurse's Pantry and co-chair Verona Fights Hunger. Nina also volunteers with Rosemarie's Ranch Rescue and Hope's Promise Equine Assisted Activities Programs, and she's the proud owner of six amazing guinea pigs who happily enjoy the fruits of her garden each summer. Giving back and supporting both local families and animal-centered



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Helpful Organic Gardening Resources

During the recent workshop with Dani from [The Backyard Co.](#), she shared some of her favorite resources for organic gardening and natural pest control. One of her top recommendations was **Savvy Gardening**, a fantastic website created by gardening experts Niki Jabbour, Jessica Walliser, and Tara Nolan. The site offers helpful articles, videos, and practical advice for organic gardeners of all experience levels.

Dani also recommended several of their online gardening courses and shared her enthusiasm for Jessica Walliser's book, *Plant Partners*, which focuses on companion planting and creating healthier, more resilient gardens naturally.

What's Up in the Vegetable Garden

The Best Varieties of Peppers to Grow at Home

Peppers are so much fun to grow in the kitchen garden. They don't require a ton of garden space or work, but they give you a big payout. Plus, they can stay in the garden for several seasons. Now that's my kind of plant.

But here's the thing: A lot of people jump straight to bell peppers when they're starting their vegetable garden. Bell peppers are great—don't get me wrong. But they're much harder to grow than almost every other type of pepper.

So here are 15 types of peppers you can grow in your garden instead of bell peppers. I know we all have different spice tolerances, so I've ranked them according to the Scoville Heat Unit scale (SHU). That way, you can find a pepper that's easy to grow and easy to stomach. Let's start with sweet peppers, shall we?

A List of the Best Peppers to Grow at Home

Jimmy Nardello peppers

Banana peppers

Lunchbox peppers

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Poblano peppers

Anaheim peppers

Shishito peppers

Biquinho peppers

Jalapeño peppers

Serrano peppers

Cayenne peppers

Thai hot chili peppers

Habanero peppers

Datil peppers

Sweet Peppers & Mild Peppers

Peppers are considered sweet or mild as long as they have under 4,000 heat units. Bell peppers are the ultimate sweet pepper. They literally have 0 Scoville units. My 4 favorite sweet peppers to grow have little to no capsaicin, so you can eat them whole (minus the stem, of course).

Sweet peppers grow best when the temps are in the 60s, 70s, and 80s. You may find that your plants will drop their flowers once the temperature spikes over 90°F (32.2°C). In my experience, sweet peppers just don't grow over hot summers quite as well as their hotter counterparts. If you live in a hot climate, your sweet peppers will thrive during your spring and fall seasons.

Let's look at some of the most popular sweet and mild pepper varieties to grow in your garden.

The Best Italian Peppers: Jimmy Nardello Peppers



Scoville Heat Units: 0 to 100

These peppers were brought over from Southern Italy by—you guessed it—the Nardello family. When ripe, these peppers are bright red and glossy and about 10 inches long. The plants are productive and compact, making them ideal for container gardens.

These peppers are super flavorful—sweet with just a hint of smokiness when cooked.

How to Enjoy

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Peel and puree them to make hummus.
Slice them up and add them to sandwiches.

The Best Peppers for Snacking: Banana Peppers



Scoville Heat Units: 0 to 500

Banana peppers, perhaps best known for their presence in Greek salads, are sweet with just a little zest. Their skin is smooth and waxy.

Your banana peppers will be about 2 to 3 inches long when they're mature. They're typically harvested while they're still yellowish-green, but you could leave them on the plant to turn orange to red if you'd like.

How to Enjoy

Pop them in your mouth right off the plant.
Slice them up and put them on sandwiches or in salads.
Use them as pizza toppings.

Another great snacking option are lunchbox peppers.

The Best Peppers for Pickling: Peperoncini Peppers



Scoville Heat Units: 100 to 500

These Italian peppers are often pickled to add a sweet tang to Greek and Italian food.

Peperoncini are typically harvested when they're still yellowy-green and about 2 to 3 inches long. Unlike banana peppers, their skin will be soft and wrinkly.

How to Enjoy

Pickle them and toss them on pizzas, salads, and sandwiches.
Add fresh peppers to sauces for pizza or pasta.

The Best Substitutes for Bell Peppers: Pimento Peppers

Scoville Heat Units: 100 to 500

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because they have extra thick and juicy skins. Plus, they're smaller, so they're much easier to grow.

Harvest these heart-shaped peppers when they turn from green to fire-engine red and are about 3 to 4 inches in length.

How to Enjoy

Cut them up and dip them in hummus.

Roast them.

Stuff them like you would a bell pepper.

Dry them and then ground them to make your own paprika!

Toss into soups and stews.

Semi-Hot Peppers

Pepper enthusiasts consider anything between 4,000 to 15,000 heat units a medium or semi-hot pepper. I'm going to lower this threshold a bit because most of us aren't out here growing peppers to make the world's hottest hot sauce, right? I know I certainly am not.

These semi-hot peppers do a little better in hot weather than sweet peppers, but you still might consider giving them some shade when temps are above 95°F (35°C).

The Best Peppers for Stuffing: Poblano Peppers



Scoville Heat Units: 1,000 to 2,000

Poblanos are one of the more popular Mexican chile peppers. You may also see the dried version of these peppers referred to as ancho peppers—the main ingredient in mole poblano. Poblanos are wide and somewhat flat, and they have thick walls, which makes them perfect for stuffing. If you're a fan of Mexican food or Tex-Mex, you've likely seen your share of poblanos in the classic dish, chiles rellenos.

Poblano peppers are typically harvested while they're still underripe and dark green, before they turn reddish brown. Each pepper should be about 3 to 6 inches long and 2 inches wide. If you let your peppers mature on the plant, keep in mind they'll be much hotter.

How to Enjoy

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Dice them and toss them into your tacos.

Quintessential Green Chili Peppers: Anaheim Peppers



Scoville Heat Units: 500 to 2,500

These peppers were developed by New Mexico State University to have few seeds inside. They're thick walled and have a curved, tapered shaped.

Even though these peppers are on the larger side, the plants are still super productive. Anaheim peppers are typically picked while still green and about 6 inches long. You can leave them to turn that vivid New Mexican

red color if you'd prefer.

How to Enjoy

Roast them.

Stuff them.

Make chile relleno.

Make salsa or green chile.

Toss them into your chicken tortilla soup.

My Absolute Favorite Peppers: Shishito Peppers



Scoville Heat Units: 100 to 1,000

In my opinion, these Japanese peppers have the perfect amount of heat and a lovely sweet, slightly smokey flavor. Every now and then, you get a rogue shishito that's much hotter than the norm, but even those peppers are considerably less hot than a jalapeño.

Shishito pepper plants are super easy to grow and productive.

Shishitos are typically harvested when they're still green or just beginning to turn orange and about 2 to 4 inches long. They have thin, slightly wrinkled skin that makes them great for cooking.

Shishito peppers are easy to grow and highly productive. Ideal for gardeners of all experience levels, they thrive in containers or garden beds and are perfect for home

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sweet peppers are sure to add a gourmet flair to any dish.

How to Enjoy

Eat them raw, straight from the garden.

Grill them.

Blister them (try tossing them in an air fryer with some EVOO and salt; add some lemon juice at the end). So delicious!

Roast them and then drizzle some sesame oil and soy sauce.

Pan fry them.

The Tastiest Semi-Hot Peppers for Pickling: Biquinho Peppers



Scoville Heat Units: 1,000 to 2,000

These little Brazilian peppers (pronounced be-KEEN-yo) were such a fun discovery. I don't love how they taste fresh, but if you quick-pickle them, they add this wonderful tartness to your meals.

Each plant produces 100s of these teeny ornament-shaped peppers that aren't even an inch long. They're most flavorful when harvested once they've changed from light green to red, orange, or yellow.

How to Enjoy

Pickle them and add them to soups, stews, and bean and rice bowls.

Use them as garnishes—they're so cute!

Hot Peppers

All right, we're officially moving into what I consider hot pepper territory. These peppers have more capsaicin, so you might want to avoid eating the seeds and the membranes (you'll also want to wear gloves when you're harvesting and handling them).

These peppers can handle the heat, so they're perfect to grow over the summer if you live in a hot climate. They tend to be smaller in size than sweeter peppers, so you'll get a lot of peppers off each plant.

Now, you won't see any ghost peppers or Carolina Reapers on this list. I don't know about you, but I typically like to be able to eat what I grow. Some of these peppers

The Easiest Peppers to Grow: Jalapeño Peppers



Scoville Heat Units: 2,000 to 5,000

There's a reason these are a popular pepper. Not only are they super tasty and only tolerably hot (be warned though that the ones you grow may be much hotter than their grocery store counterparts), they're also really simple to grow in the kitchen garden. Each plant is prolific, producing dozens of peppers in just one season.

You can harvest them as soon as they've reached a couple inches in length, when they're still green, or you can leave them to ripen all the way to red for more spice. If you only want to grow one type of hot pepper, jalapeños are a great place to start.

How to Enjoy

Stuff them with some cream cheese and wrap them in bacon, then grill them.

Warning: jalapeño peppers are addictive.

Add them to sauces and salsa.

Make garden-fresh pico de gallo.

Grill them and eat them with your protein of choice.

The Best Homegrown Peppers for Salsa: Serrano Peppers



Scoville Heat Units: 10,000 to 23,000

Serranos look like smaller, thinner jalapeño peppers, but they're much hotter.

They're typically harvested when they're still green and just a little over 2 inches long.

Serranos have thin walls, which makes them ideal for dicing and tossing into salsas, but not for stuffing.

How to Enjoy

Make homemade salsa.

Toss them into a stir fry if you want to turn up the heat.

Pickle them to keep their flavor but tame their heat.

The Best Peppers for Homemade Crushed Red Pepper: Cayenne Peppers

Scoville Heat Units: 30,000 to 50,000

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Cayenne peppers are those pencil-thin, curled peppers you see in Southwestern decor and cuisine.

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These plants are super-producers and very attractive. Harvest your cayenne peppers once they're about 4 to 6 inches long and have turned yellow or dark red.

How to Enjoy

Toss them into a pot of chili.

Dry them and make red pepper flakes.

String them up to make your own pepper ristra.

The Best Pepper to Grow in a Container Garden: Thai Hot Chili Peppers



Scoville Heat Units: 50,000 to 100,000

There are actually dozens of varieties of Thai peppers. These thin peppers tend to grow upright on more compact plants, which makes them not only super decorative but also perfect for patio gardens.

How to Enjoy

Toss into your stir-fry or curry for a (super) spicy kick.

Make a spicy vinegar.

Dry them and crush them into flakes.

The Best Hot Hot Pepper to Grow: Habanero Peppers



Scoville Heat Units: 150,000-350,000

Habaneros are lantern-shaped peppers that pack a lot of heat but also add a subtle fruity flavor. Most habaneros are about 2 inches long and ripen to orange, but you can also grow red, white, or brown peppers.

How to Enjoy

Make homemade salsa or hot sauce.

Add zest to grilled meats.

Mix with tropical fruit like mango or pineapple for a flavorful but hot chutney.

Another fun option besides habaneros are datil peppers, which rank between 100,000 and 300,000 for Scoville Heat Units. Datils also have a fruity flavor, and while they're pretty hot, the heat doesn't linger long in your mouth. My friend who's into

*Published July 21, 2025 by Nicole Burke
Gardenary*



Pepper Companion Plants: 10 Plants That Grow Well with Peppers

While peppers are simple enough to grow in garden beds or pots, these heat-loving plants grow best when they're planted beside companion plants that lend a helping hand to their growth. From pest-repelling herbs to pollinator-friendly flowers, here are some of our favorite companion plants for peppers. We also cover a few plants to avoid if you want a bigger harvest this season.

Benefits of Companion Planting for Peppers

I've been growing peppers in my garden for years, but in the first few growing seasons, I struggled with poor pollination and lost more bell peppers than I could count to deer! This inspired me to explore growing peppers with companion plants, and the results have made it a regular part of my gardening routine.

Not only do pepper companion plants repel insect pests and make peppers more resistant to disease, but some can also deter deer and rabbit activity.

The best plant pairings will also reduce weed growth or improve soil quality, helping peppers grow better. What's more, the right companion plants usually have the same basic care needs as peppers, which makes them easy to grow together in the garden.



Companion Plants for Peppers

Peppers can be interplanted with companion plants or grown in succession with them to maximize your garden's productivity. In general, the same companion plants work well for all sorts of peppers, including mild bell peppers and fiery hot chili peppers:

- Basil
- Alliums (garlic, chives, shallots, scallions, and onions)
- Cilantro
- Nasturtiums
- Oregano
- Marigolds
- Root vegetables (carrots, radishes, and beets)
- Spinach
- Snapdragons

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Basil

Growing basil and tomatoes together in the garden is one of the most classic companion plant pairings. But basil also grows well alongside peppers, as these two plants share similar care needs. Taller peppers also provide much-needed shade to tender basil leaves during the peak of summer heat, while basil's strong scent repels several pepper pests, including whiteflies and thrips.



Alliums

When it comes to companion plants for peppers, alliums are at the top of my personal list. Garlic, chives, shallots, scallions, and standard onions all have a strong sulfur-like aroma that repels a variety of pepper pests—including deer, which have been the major threat to the peppers in my garden. Onions and peppers are also both essential ingredients for homemade salsa, while allium flowers attract pollinators to pepper plants and increase harvest yields.



Cilantro

Peppers and cilantro are classic salsa ingredients that naturally pair well together. If you allow cilantro plants to flower, they'll also draw in pollinators and beneficial insects, like hoverflies, that feed on pepper pests. If you want to gather an ongoing harvest of cilantro while taking advantage of this herb's pest-repelling qualities, succession-plant cilantro seeds at 2- to 3-week intervals so the older plants can flower while the newer plantings remain harvestable.



Nasturtiums

Bright orange and yellow nasturtium flowers bring vibrant color to veggie beds, but these edible flowers also perk up pepper health. They are trap crops that draw aphids away from peppers and other veggies. These plants also attract pollinators and other beneficial insects. Trailing varieties of nasturtium can be used as a living mulch to keep weeds from encroaching around your peppers.



Oregano

Many fragrant herbs can be used for natural pest control, but oregano is particularly effective, repelling most garden pests. If you allow oregano to flower, it will also

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is a perennial herb and will come back each season, while pepper plants won't.



Marigolds

Marigolds are used as companion plants for many vegetables because their brightly colored blooms attract pollinators and beneficial insects, such as lacewings, ladybugs, and parasitic wasps. However, if you plant them at least 2 months before you sow peppers, these



plants can also repel nematodes in the soil. Marigolds also grow readily from seed and can be grown in containers or garden beds, depending on your available space.

Root Vegetables

Carrots, radishes, beets, and other root crops tolerate chilly weather and grow relatively fast. Sowing these plants early in the season, before you plant peppers, can extend your harvest window and let you gather more food from your garden before your pepper plants start producing. If you prefer, you can also interplant root veggies around the base of pepper plants, as these plants won't compete with peppers for sunlight access and their large roots aerate the soil when you harvest them.



Spinach

Cold-tolerant spinach plants can also be grown in succession with peppers in spring and fall to keep your garden productive when pepper plants aren't harvestable. Growing spinach beneath the leaves of peppers also provides spinach with light shade and can keep it from bolting too quickly during a spell of warm weather.



Snapdragons

Many annual flowers can be interplanted with peppers to attract pollinators and beneficial insects. However, snapdragons are particularly good for this task, as they grow quickly from seed, prefer the same basic growing conditions as peppers, and stay small enough that they won't crowd out your vegetables.

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Legumes

Beans, peas, and other legumes fix nitrogen into the soil and improve soil health over time. Growing these plants near your peppers can provide additional nitrogen,



helping them grow better and produce more. Depending on your garden, you can choose vining or pole-type legumes trained on trellises, or you can purchase bush-type legumes that have a more upright growth habit and work well in containers.

What Not to Grow with Peppers

Although peppers grow well with many vegetables, herbs, and flowers, you can run into trouble if you grow peppers with the following plants:

Tomatoes and Potatoes

Like peppers, tomatoes and potatoes belong to the nightshade family and growing them close to peppers can increase pest activity and allow pests and diseases to spread between your plants.

Brassicas

Cauliflower, brussels sprouts, broccoli, and other plants in the Brassica family can compete with peppers for nutrients and can cause pepper plants to become stunted.

Fennel

Fennel releases allelopathic compounds into the soil, making it hard for other plants, including peppers, to grow nearby.

*Last Updated April 24, 2026 by Lauren Landers
Almanac*

What's Up in the Herb Garden

How to Plant and Grow Cilantro and Coriander

Craving fresh flavor from garden to table? Cilantro (and its spicy alter ego, coriander) packs a punch in both leafy and seed forms. This cool-season herb is a must-have for salsa lovers, curry makers, and taco enthusiasts alike. But don't let its delicate leaves fool you: cilantro is fast-growing, fuss-



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savor this aromatic overachiever.

Cilantro vs. Coriander—What's the Difference?

Cilantro and coriander are different parts of the same plant. Cilantro, *Coriandrum sativum*, usually refers to the plant's leaves, which are used as an herb. The leaves are part of the vegetative stage of the plant's life cycle.



Coriander refers to the seeds, which are typically ground and used as a spice. The seeds develop after the plant flowers.

Planting

When to Plant Cilantro

Plant cilantro in the spring after the last frost date or in the fall. In the southwestern U.S., a fall planting may last through spring until the weather heats up again.

Do not grow in the summer heat, as the plants will bolt (such that it will be past harvesting). The leaves that grow on bolted plants tend to be bitter in flavor."

Where to Plant Cilantro

It is best to choose a sunny site that will allow cilantro to self-seed as it ought to do. Plant in an herb garden or the corner of a vegetable garden. When the weather gets warm, the plant will quickly finish its life cycle and send up a long stalk, which will produce blossoms and later seeds. Little plants will sprout during the season and the next spring.

How to Plant Cilantro

Plant the seeds in light, well-draining soil and space them 1 to 2 inches apart. Sow the seeds at 3-week intervals for continued harvest.

Space rows about 12 inches apart.

It is important to keep the seeds moist during their germination, so remember to water the plants regularly.

Growing

Water the seedlings regularly throughout the growing season. They require about 1 inch of water per week for best growth.

Thin seedlings to 6 inches apart so that they have room to develop healthy leaves.

Once the plants are established, they do not need as much water per week. Keep them moist, but be careful not to overwater them.

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cup of fertilizer per 25 feet of row. Be sure not to overfertilize the plants.

To help prevent weeds, mulch around the plants as soon as they are visible above the soil. You can also till shallowly to help prevent root damage from weeds.

Harvesting

Harvest when the plant is 6 to 8 inches tall. When the cilantro grows its stalk, cut off the plant after the seeds drop and let it self-seed.

The large leaves can be cut individually from the plants. For the smaller leaves, cut off 1-1/2 to 2 inches above the crown.

You can also remove the entire plant at once, but doing so will mean you will not be able to continue harvesting for the rest of the growing season.

To store coriander seeds, cut off the seed heads when the plant begins to turn brown and put them in a paper bag. Hang the bag until the plant dries and the seeds fall off. You can then store the seeds in sealed containers.

To store cilantro leaves, you can either freeze or dry them. To freeze, put the leaves in a resealable freezer bag and store them in your freezer. To dry them, hang the plant in a warm place until fully dried, then store the leaves in a resealable bag or container.

Types of Cilantro

Slow-bolting varieties, such as 'Costa Rica', 'Leisure', and 'Long Standing' are the best choices for harvesting the leaves.

Catherine Boeckmann
Almanac.com



Recipes

Shrimp and Cilantro Shu Mai

Mark Bittman

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Total Time: 30 minutes

Yield: 10-12 dumplings

[How-to Video](#)

INGREDIENTS

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup soy sauce

1 tablespoon rice wine

1 tablespoon sesame oil

1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger

$\frac{1}{2}$ pound shrimp, peeled and deveined

$\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup fresh cilantro leaves

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup roughly chopped scallions, white parts only

10 to 12 round dumpling skins

Juice of 1 lime

PREPARATION

Step 1

Combine the soy sauce, rice wine, sesame oil and ginger in a bowl. Put half the shrimp, half the cilantro and all the scallions in a food processor and pulse; add just enough of the soy mixture to create a smooth paste, about 1 to 2 tablespoons. Transfer to a bowl. Roughly chop the remaining shrimp and cilantro, add them to the bowl and stir to combine.

Step 2

Place a dumpling skin on a work surface, moisten the edges with water, and put 1 teaspoon of the filling in the center. Gather the edges of the wrapper up around the filling, squeezing gently, to pleat the sides; some of the filling should remain exposed. Repeat with the remaining dumpling skins and filling, keeping the dumpling wrappers and dumplings covered with damp towels while you work.

Step 3

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sauce.

Step 4

Put as many dumplings in the steamer as you can fit in a single layer and cover the pot. Cook until the exposed filling turns pink and the wrappers are tender, 4 to 6 minutes, then transfer the dumplings to a serving platter. Repeat with the remaining dumplings. Serve with the dipping sauce.



Serrano Cilantro Gin and Tonic

Cake N Knife

A Serrano Cilantro Gin and Tonic is a spicy flavor explosion of boozy perfection. The delicious heat of the serrano pepper with herbaceous cilantro and floral gin come together in this highball glass to make a wonderfully balanced drink that will be the star of your next cocktail party!

It's the perfect cocktail that's not a margarita for those of you who feel like margaritas are too overdone for Cinco de Mayo, or are simply trying to avoid tequila because it leads to bad decisions...

Not that this is my plan or anything...

You'll love the surprising heat that comes through in each sip, paired with cilantro and gin to make it feel like you are drinking happiness in a glass.

Cheers my friends!

Ingredients

1 serrano pepper thinly sliced (seeded if you don't like it spicy)

1/4 cup cilantro leaves stems removed and roughly chopped

2 oz gin

Juice of 1/2 a lime

Tonic

Ice



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Garnish: cilantro leaves serrano peppers

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Instructions

Pour the lime juice and gin into the highball glass.

Add the cilantro and 4 to 5 slices of serrano pepper. Muddle for 30 seconds, until the they've broken up.

Fill 3/4 of the way with ice cubes.

Fill the remainder of the glass with tonic.

Garnish with a bunch of cilantro and additional serrano peppers if desired.

Enjoy responsibly.



Poems & Humor

The Pepper Garden

Abby Owusu

It started with something small.

Not a dream. Not a plan. Just a need.

After we moved into our new home, everything felt new and hopeful, but there was one ordinary thing that kept catching me off guard. I love pepper, yet now and then, when I reached for it, there was none. It sounds insignificant, but it bothered me more than I expected. It made me aware of how much comfort lives in the smallest things—things we only notice when they're missing.

One evening, I stood on the veranda and looked at the empty land behind the house. It wasn't beautiful. Just soil. Quiet. Waiting. And in that still



Pepper Puns That Will Spice Up Your Day

You're jalapeño business.

I'm kind of a big dill pepper.

Don't be salty, be peppery.

You really seasoned my heart.

I'm on a roll and it's pepperoni style.

Stay spicy and everything will be fine.

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I didn't know what I was doing. I wasn't confident. But the next morning, I cleared a small space, pressed seeds into the earth, and watered them. Then came the waiting, the kind that tests you. Each day, I checked the soil, sometimes hopeful, sometimes doubtful. There were moments I felt silly, standing over bare ground, expecting something to happen. But I kept coming back. I kept watering. I kept believing, even when nothing showed.

Then one day, almost without warning, something changed.

Tiny green shoots broke through the soil.

I remember standing there longer than necessary, just looking. I felt something warm rise in my chest. Not excitement, something softer. Gratitude. Proof that patience leaves a trace, even when it feels invisible.

As the plants grew, so did something inside me. The garden slowed me down. It asked me to be present. It reminded me that growth doesn't rush and that care isn't loud—it's consistent. Quiet. Faithful.

Soon, flowers appeared. Then peppers. Real ones. Enough to harvest. Enough to share.

You make my heart skip a beat and a pepper.

Pepper yourself for a good time.

I'm feeling hot and grounded like fresh black pepper.

Knock knock.

Who's there?

Jalapeño.

Jalapeño who?

Jalapeño business.

Knock knock.

Who's there?

Pepperoni.

Pepperoni who?

Pepperoni way to my heart.

Knock knock.

Who's there?

Chili.

Chili who?

Chili today, hot tamale.

Knock knock.

Who's there?

Bell.

Bell who?

Bell pepper you ready for a laugh.

I heard a joke about getting pepper sprayed.

It was a macing.

What do you call a nosy pepper?

Jalapeño business.

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commented on how well the plants were doing. Small conversations grew naturally, without effort. What started as a personal solution became a shared moment. A connection. A reminder that giving doesn't always require abundance, sometimes it just requires willingness.

Looking back, I realise I didn't just grow pepper.

I grew patient.

I grew trust in small beginnings.

I grew the understanding that meaning doesn't arrive grandly; it grows slowly when you choose to care.

The pepper garden still grows behind our home. And every time I step into it, I remember this:

Sometimes, life asks nothing more of us than to notice a small need, plant a seed, and stay long enough to see what becomes of it.



Because it was a little chili.

Let's pepper this conversation with some spice.

I'm feeling hot and spicy, just like my pepper.

Life is sweeter when you add a little pepper.

Spice up your life with just a pinch of pepper.

I'm just trying to pepper in a good pun here!

I peppered him with questions until he finally cracked.

You're one hot pepper—too hot to handle.

I'm not a chef, but I know when to pepper the conversation.

Don't spice up your life too much, it might get pepper-y.



Building Legacy One Brick at a Time

[Verona Community Garden and That's My Brick!®](#) have joined forces to raise money for our project! The Verona Community Garden is located near HBW Middle School.

The goal of this space has been to create a multi-use community centerpiece. The garden has given community members an opportunity to learn, connect and grow together.

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donations. As the demand for the garden has grown we need a walkway in our public section of the garden. We are asking for your support through an engraved brick fundraiser.

Help us create a legacy for the community by showing your support with this fundraiser.



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Stay Connected with VCG!

Join our vibrant community online! Follow us on Facebook (*Verona NJ Community Garden*) and Instagram (*veronanjcommunitygarden*) for updates, photos, and event highlights. You can also stay in the loop by joining the *VCG WhatsApp Group*!

VCG WhatsApp Group

VCG Manager:

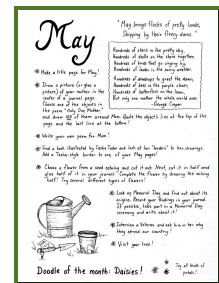
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